Adventure Coder

Issue 21

CONTRIBUTIONS:

These are always welcome,
and keep us going! We do
prefer typed articles on
A4 white paper and margin
(but handwritten articles
are also welcome.) Please
make sure type or print
is as dark as possible,
so it'll photocopy!
  We're also pleased to
get drawings, cartoons,
and anything else you
can do!

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work appears here.

Editorial

Welcome to 'Adventure Coder' issue 21! A new year means Coder is a year older too - it's now five years since the first issue was released! But before I break out the champagne to celebrate (only joking actually!), here's what's in this issue...

For GAC users, Robin Rawson-Tetley has some great tips for improving your adventures, and an excellent routine for BASIC users to compress your text! See Robin's letter to the magazine later on, too.

On the subject of letters, we've a bumper crop of them as promised last issue! If you've anything you want to say, be it a complaint or a recommendation, don't hesitate to write in to us - we enjoy reading and publishing your letters!

Stephen Groves continues his mammoth adventure-writing program in machine code this issue, with part five. Look out for the following parts in the next issues of Coder.

I've been sent a big pile of computer magazines from Poland, so I thought why not give them a review. You can read all about the Polish computer market in my article, and see what l thought of their magazines. (We like to be an international mag!)

If you're a STAC user, then read George March's piece about the continuing problems he has getting STAC to do what he wants it to! Knowing George however, he won't be easily put off, and will soon have a program running his way!

If you've missed out on any of the previous twenty issues of Adventure Coder, then why not order some of the back issues? I've just reduced all these in price, so they're a real bargain now! See the back pages for full details.

Talking of prices, you'll have noticed that I've had to up the cost of Coder to £1.50 (in Britain). It still makes a loss, and should really cost a lot more, but I like to give value for money, and don't feel it has enough material at the moment to warrant anything like the prices some magazines are charging thesedays! I hope you all feel that Coder is still terrific value! However, if you are one of the many overseas readers, then you'll have noticed the costs for you have risen quite a bit. This is something I've had to do, because the Post Office over here are now charging parcels at a minimum weight of 100g. Before, I could choose a cheaper 60g weight!! But now, I must pay the minimum 100g weight, meaning it costs more to deliver Coder abroad now! Other magazines like mine are facing the same problems! I am sorry that it means you must pay more for your copies, but what can I do to help you? The only solution might be to add a lot more pages until the weight was 100g, but then readers in Britain would have to pay more! And I don't have enough material to fill any more pages! (Of course, if everyone were to send me lots more stuff to print!..)

Finally, I do hope you enjoy this new issue, and I can't wait to get the next one out in a month or two. Till then, keep adventure writing!
Yours, The Ed.

A Guide to the subtle side of the GAC

By Robin R-Tetley

The Punctuation Problem

Have you ever noticed how whenever you play a GACked game, an
inventory command prints up your inventory - without a full stop
on the end, this is Sooooo easy to overcome, define message 235
(or whatever) as a full stop on it's own, and add "MESS 235" to
the end of the inventory line.

More importantly, have you ever noticed how if there is a "You
can see ..." on the end of a description, you lose the full stop
from the end of description, how annoying! (gnash gnash), but
there is a way round the problem, using marker zero.

Marker zero becomes set if the last move the player made
described a location, so all you have to do is put at the bottom
of high priority "IF (SET? 0) RESE 0 MESS 235 END" and omit all
full stops from the end of your location descriptions (doing this
also gives you one extra character for the description too!).
 You then need to alter message 253 (you can see...) to read ".
You can see" (a full stop, a space, followed by "you can see")
and that, as they say is that.

Modified Descriptions

Have you noticed how it doesn't seem possible to modify your
descriptions without either creating uncarriable objects, or
doing messages (which unfortunately, are repeated after every
input). Well I believe I have found the perfect solution to the
problem, I shall give the example of a door, which can be opened
or closed.

First things first, I shall use marker six to indicate whether
the door is open (set for open). The door is in location one and
the descriptions contains nothing about the door.

Message one contains "To the south is a door, tightly shut",
message two contains "To the south is a door, wide open" (I
wouldn't use descriptions like these in a game - of course, but
this just hypothetical (ahem), also, make sure you don't put any
full-stops on the end)
 Now put in high priority (below the full stop printer - if
you've used it):

```
IF ( RES? 6 AND AT 1 AND SET? Ʊ ) MESS 235 LF MESS 1 END
IF ( AT 1 AND SET? 6 AND SET? 0 ) MESS 235 LF MESS 2 END
```

Now, when the location is described, it is modified accordingly.
(as Timmy Mallet would say, "utterly brilliant!" (not that I
watch Timmy Mallet of course, although I am said to have
masochistic tendencies))

All commands

I'm sure that many have you will have played adventures on the
PAW (or not if you don't have a Speccy or Amstrad) where the
"DOALL" command allows a get and drop (and anything else you
want) ALL. Because GAC contains no FOR-NEXT instructiona - as in
BASIC, you have to repeat every instruction - ie: test every
object and if ALL was typed, I would suggest that you don't
implement this if you're running low on memory, but if you're
using GAC+ or your adventure is fairly small, you could benefit
from this.

Quite simply each line follows this format, and all you do is
put them in Low priority below the take and drop lines already
in.


```
IF ( VERB 7 AND ADVE 1 AND HERE Ƒ ) GET F OBJ F MESS 237 END
IF ( VERB 8 AND ADVE 1 AND CARR F ) DROP F OBJ F MESS 238 END
```


The memory usage of this is roughly 0.1K per object, so if you
have 15 objects, to use this get and drop all would take 0.1 X 15
= 1.5K (ouch!, unless you own GAC+ and a disk drive). Repeat each
line, replace F with the number of each object, note that you
have to put each object number into both lines. Also note that I
am assuming that adverb 1 is all and that messages 237 and 238
are ": Taken." and ": Dropped." respectively.
 When used it will print "Object: Taken." where object is it's
description.

Containers

Now here's an interesting one, containers on GAC are actually a
lot easier (and possible!) than you'd think.

I shall explain again with examples, we shall take our container
which shall be a sack and set aside a location to pretend it is,
say 50. Then set aside a counter to hold the number of objects in
it, in this case 1. And decide on a limit of objects it can hold,
say 3.
VERB 1=PUT, ADVE 1=INTO or IN, NOUN 5=SACK
OBJECT 5=A SACK, VERB 14=EXAMINE, VERB 15=REMOVE

IF (CTR 1 < 3 AND VERB 1 AND NO1 AND ADVE 1 AND NOUN 5 AND AVAI
NO1 AND AVAI 5) NO1 TO 50 OKAY END

IF (VERB 14 AND NOUN 5) MESS 234 (message 234 says "the sack
contains ") LIST 50 MESS 235 WAIT END

IF (VERB 15 AND NO1 IN 50 AND AVAI 5) NO1 TO ROOM OKAY END

The first line works if the player types "put (object) into sack"
and the sack contains less than it's quota of 3 items and the
sack is here or carried and the object to be put in is here or
carried. The second line is if the player examines the sack to
see what's in it, it prints up "The sack contains " followed by
the list of objects followed by a full-stop.
The third line is if the player removes an object from the sack,
it tests if the object is in the sack and if the sack is here or
carried, it then brings the object to the current location.

Intro messages

Again, something which is relatively simple to do (and thankfully
people manage to get along with these).
All you do is put the information you would like to be displayed
in room 9999 (or any other) and change "begin where ?" to 9999,
then put in high priority - IF (AT 9999) GOTO 1 WAIT END or
whatever you want to happen, ie, you don't have to jump to
location one, you can do what you want, use messages to print
full instructions or wait for a keypress (use HOLD 65000 to wait
for a key).

A Quick Note

Notice that if you are doing a text adventure on a C64 and you
wish to put an intro message that appears giving copyright notice
etc. you must have 9999 as a blank and put in a text command in
the high priority line, and use messages to print your intro.

I was just thinking tne other day about now good STAC really coulc have been, it's got some good tnings going for it! (Could have oeen BUT ISN'T!) It now strikes me that one of its supposedly best features ISN'T! Ie, the nearly useless String$ functions (more of tnese later!), PAW never had them (and as far as I can tell PAW's still the oest adventure creator arouna, but I haven't seen ALL the PD utilities available yet, so I'm still looking!), GAC never had tnem, Quill never...etc, etc, and Quill is still used to great advantage by many writers, Jonn (Zenobi) Wilson, for example!

To me, all that these (near useless to me so far!) String$ commands do is to take up valuable memory space tnat could have oeen used for oetter commands, like WEAR, REMOVE, WEARALL, REMOVEALL, PRINTAT 'line no.' 'column no.', EXTERNAL (for allowing STAC to communicate with an external program), etc, etc.

So as I was saying, STAC's creators (Incentive) seem to have had this aosolutely absurd assumption that STAC users won't want to give any gamers the ability to WEAR/REMOVE any objects! But, I was also thinking along those String$ command lines that in order to utilise saio Strings you nave to use 'M' MESS$ 'S' to copy wnat's alreaoy in message 'M' into String$ 'S', meaning that you'd have two copies of exartly tne same message (wnat a waste of space!) so why couldn't Incentive have included something like this into the Message Table, when you're on tne Edit Message screen...

'Is this message also a String (Y/N)?'

So that you don't have to have two versions of the same message, just a means of signalling to STAC that tne contents of tne message can also be used as a String!

Maybe someone out there could actually write a program to add onto STAC to refine some of its more useless oits, in much the same way tnat Gerald Kellett did in creating the PTM Overlays for PAW. I also see aosolutely no use for the 'Death' or 'Success' commands, or for Specials I, or 2 either, if you think about it! As these can just as easily oe handled with inoividual messages and routines in High, Low, or Local, with just a Special process for generating scores, number of moves, etc, like I have!

Now instead of just complaining, I've got a few ideas here that might help other people! As one thing that gets me about STAC is wnen you try to use OBJSHT to list any objects in messages, for example in Local...

IF VERB "THROW" AND NOUN "STONE" AND NOUN "TREE" THEN IF CARRIED 7 THEN ITIS "TREE" MESSAGE A OBJSHT 7 MESSAGE B OBJSHT 8 MESSAGE C BRING 6 WAIT

With object 7 = 'A small stone', object 8 = 'An apple', Message A = 'You throw the ', B = ' up at the tree and the ', and C = ' falls to the ground!' (Notice those spaces, please!)

As the way STAC differs from PAW in LISTing any objects is that PAW deliberately misses out the first adjective ('A' hammer, 'THE' oag of nails, or 'SOME' juicy blackoerries, etc), but STAC still prints tnem, so what you actually get, on-screen, from STAC is...

'You throw the A small stone up at the tree and tne An apple falls to the ground!'

So that PAW might print...

'You pick up the apple', or 'You drop tne juicy blackoerries'

But STAC would print...

'You pick up tne 'an' apple' and 'You drop the 'Some' juicy blackberries'

Now the way I've gotten round it is to make a copy of the short description of each object into message numbers over 7000, but I've missed out each adjective, for example, if object 7 = 'A small stone' and object 8 = 'An apple', then message 7007 = 'apple' and message 7008 = 'small stone'. So that you now use...

IF VERB "THROW" AND NOUN "STONE" AND NOUN "TREE" THEN IF CARRIED 7 THEN ITIS "TREE" MESSAGE A MESSAGE (NOUN1 + 7000) MESSAGE B MESSAGE (NOUN2 + 7000) MESSAGE C BRING 8 WAIT

Which reads as it should do...

'You throw the small stone up at the tree and the apple falls to the ground!'

Now as I was saying before, about the use of String$ commands, this second idea I had is for a 'Combat routine' using these as Counters...

Counter 2I (a random number between I - 5, for the opponent's skill)
  " " 22 (a random number between I - I0, for the opponent's strength)
  " " 23 (a random number between I - 5, for the opponent's luck)
  " " 24 (Counters 2I, 22 and 23 added together for the opponent's final score)

Counter 25 (a random number between I - 5, for the player's skill)
  " " 26 (a random number between I - I0, for the player's strength)
  " " 27 (a random number between I - 5, for the player's luck)
  " " 28 (Counters 25, 26 and 27 added together for the player's final score)

Counter 29 (a random number between I - I0, for the player's life force)
  " " 30 (a random number between I - I0, for the opponent's life force)

So firstly, in Local, for the room number where the opponent is (if the attacker doesn't move around that is - if he/she does move then you'll have to put it in Low!)...

IF VERB "FLEE" AND HERE A THEN GOTO B WAIT

With 'A' being the number of the 'live' attacker/object, and 'B' being the number of a room adjacent to the one that the player's already in. (Which is why I use Local!) Also in Local, or Low, we need...

IF VERB "FIGHT" AND HERE A THEN SPECIAL C LF LF MESSAGE D THEN IF YESNO THEN OBEY$ 4 ELSE SPECIAL I4 WAIT

With Special 'C' being that which contains the 'Combat routines', message D = 'Again?'. More of OBEY$ 4 in Special I7 to come, and you could of course have the LOOK command instead of Special I4, but I find it easier the way it is! You'll also need to have something along these lines, in Local, or Low...

IF HERE A THEN MESSAGE E GET$ 0 OBEY$ 0 LF

With message E being something like 'There's an evil demon here blocking your path! Do you wish to fight, or flee?'. Now the GET$ 0 command above simply gets whatever command the player types in, and makes copies of these command(s) in String$ 0 (zero), and OBEY$ 0 just takes whatever commands are in String$ 0 and carries these commands out as if the player had just typed them in. Which is exactly what the player's just done, BUT (yes I know it really looks stupid to have to include the GET$ and OBEY$ commands instead of STAC just carrying out any commands the player types, but) the damn thing doesn't seem to work unless you do? Now for Special I7 'Start up' you'll need...

RANDOM I0 SETCNTR 29 THEN RANDOM I0 SETCNTR 30

Also...

E MESS$ 4

for the OBEY$ 4 in the 'IF VERB "FIGHT"' in Local, or Low. With message H = 'again', just the one word on its own, because this message will never be printed on-screen, it's a command to be OBEYed by STAC!

And for Special 'C' (Combat routines) we have...

1) RANDOM 5 SETCNTR 23 THEN RANDOM 5 SETCNTR 27
2) RANDOM 5 SETCNTR 21 THEN RANDOM 5 SETCNTR 25 THEN RANDOM IO
   SETCNTR 22 THEN RANDOM IO SETCNTR 26
3) COUNTER 21 +COUNT 22 THEN COUNTER 22 +COUNT 23 THEN COUNTER 23 SETCNTR 24
   THEN COUNTER 25 +COUNT 26 THEN COUNTER 26 +COUNT 27 THEN COUNTER 27
   SETCNTR 28
4) IF COUNTER 24 > COUNTER 28 THEN DEC 29 LF LF MESSAGE (RANDOM 5 + 2020)
5) IF COUNTER 28 > COUNTER 24 THEN DEC 30 LF LF MESSAGE (RANDOM 5 + 2010)
6) IF COUNTER 24 =COUNT 28 THEN LF LF MESSAGE (RANDOM 5 + 2000)
7) IF 0 =COUNT 29 THEN PAUSE 5000 MESSAGE F SPECIAL I
8) IF 0 =COUNT 30 THEN MESSAGE G A SWAP B PAUSE 5000 SPECIAL I4 WAIT

For lines 4, 5 and 6 the random messages numbers 2001 - 2005 are for if neither
the player or his/her opponent are hurt. Messages 2011 - 2015 are for if the
opponent is hurt, and messages 2021 - 2025 are for when the player is hurt.
Also you could always use the DEATH command instead of Special I in line 7,
and LOOK instead of Special I4 in line 8. Now message 'F' is the player's
'Death message' (you'll only need to inlcude message 'F' here if you don't
want to include it in Special I, the 'Death conditions'), and message 'G' is
the opponent's 'Death message'. Object 'B' for the SWAP command is the opp-
onent's 'dead, or unconscious body!

My third idea is for a fairly long set of WEAR ?/REMOVE ?/WEAR ALL/REMOVE ALL
(oo-er! - Ed) rouitnes involving the MESSAGE (NOUN1 + 7000) commands I gave
earlier! Now for this entire set of routines you'll have to make sure that
your wearable object(s) has/have object numbers between 20 and 30, for exam-
ple if your game has a wearable hat (or whatever?) then the 'hat' could be
object 25, and using the MESSAGE (NOUN1 + 7000) idea then message 7025
would simply oe 'hat' also. So for Low Priority, we have...

1) IF (NOUN1 > 20 AND NOUN1 < 30) AND VERB "WEAR" THEN IF HERE NOUN1 XOR
   (NOT CARRIED NOUN1 AND NOT NOUN1 IN IO000) THEN MESSAGE 9909 MESSAGE
   (NOUN1 + 7000) MESSAGE A NEWCOM

Message 9909 = 'But you don't have the ' (rememoer those spaces!)
Message 'A' = ' to be able to wear!'

2) IF (NOUN1 > 20 AND NOUN1 < 30) AND VERB "WEAR" THEN IF (NOUN1 IN
   IO000) THEN MESSAGE B MESSAGE (NOUN1 + 7000) MESSAGE 9914 NEWCOM

Message 'B' = 'But, you're already wearing the '
Message 9914 = '.' (this is a full-stop)

3) IF (NOUN1 > 20 AND NOUN1 < 30) AND VERB "WEAR" THEN IF (NOT AVAIL
   NOUN1) THEN MESSAGE 9906 MESSAGE (NOUN1 + 7000) MESSAGE C NEWCOM

Message 9906 = 'But, what form of '
Message 'C' = ' is this?'

4) IF (NOUN1 > 30 XOR NOUN1 < 20) AND NOT NOUN "ALL" AND VERB "WEAR" THEN
   IF AVAIL NOUN1 THEN MESSAGE D NEWCOM

Message 'D' = 'Sorry, but that item isn't wearable!'

5) IF (NOUN1 > 20 AND NOUN1 < 30) AND VERB "WEAR" THEN IF CARRIED NOUN1
   THEN NOUN1 TO IO000 SETAMNT (AMOUNT - WEIGHT NOUN1) THEN MESSAGE E
   MESSAGE (NOUN1 + 7000) MESSAGE 9914 LF WAIT

Message 'E' = 'You put on the '

I've used the SETAMNT (AMOUNT - WEIGHT NOUN1) commands so that the weight
option is changed, allowing the player to still be able to pick up another
object (as with STAC you can only alter the weight of items carried NOT
the number of objects carried!), as normally with the 'obj' TO 'room'
command it doesn't change the weight of the items carried. Even if you DO
wear an object and your hands are empty STAC would still say 'You're carry-
ing too much to pick up anything else!'

6) IF VERB "WEAR" AND NOUN "ALL" THEN SPECIAL A WAIT

And now onto the REMOVE?/REMOVE ALL commands...

I) IF (NOUNI > 20 AND NOUNI < 30) AND VERB "REMOVE" THEN IF (HERE NOUNI XOR CARRIED NOUNI) THEN MESSAGE F MESSAGE (NOUNI + 7000) MESSAGE 9914 NEWCOM

Message 'F' = 'But, you're not wearing the '

2) IF (NOUNI > 20 AND NOUNI < 30) AND VERB "REMOVE" THEN IF (NOT AVAIL NOUNI AND NOT NOUNI IN IO000) THEN MESSAGE 9906 MESSAGE (NOUNI + 7000) MESSAGE C NEWCOM

3) IF (NOUNI > 20 AND NOUNI < 30) AND VERB "REMOVE" THEN IF (NOUNI IN IO000 AND STREN? <= AMOUNT) THEN MESSAGE C MESSAGE (NOUNI = 7000) MESSAGE 9914 NEWCOM

Message 'C' = 'Sorry, but you're carrying too much to be able to remove the '

4) IF (NOUNI > 30 XOR NOUNI < 20) AND NOT NOUN "ALL" AND VERB "REMOVE" THEN MESSAGE H NEWCOM

Message 'H' = 'But, you're not wearing anything like that!'

5) IF (NOUNI > 20 AND NOUNI < 30) AND VEBR "REMOVE" THEN IF (STREN? >+ AMOUNT AND NOUNI IN IO000) SETAMNT (AMOUNT + WEIGHT NOUNI) NOUNI TO WITH MESSAGE I MESSAGE (NOUNI + 7000) MESSAGE 9914 LF WAIT
        C(i)- not 'one'!

Message 'I' = 'You take off the '

6) IF VERB "REMOVE" AND NOUN "ALL" THEN SPECIAL B WAIT

And for those two Specials I mentioned... For Special 'A', our WEAR ALL process (this is pretty complicated) we have...

I) IF ZERO? FIRSTOB WITH THEN MESSAGE J NEWCOM

Message 'J' = 'But, you don't have anything that's wearable!'

2) IF FIRSTOB WITH THEN REPEAT
3) IF FIRSTOB WITH < 20 THEN FIRSTOB WITH TO 9999
4) UNTIL FIRSTOB WITH > 20 REPEAT
5) LF MESSAGE E MESSAGE (FIRSTOB WITH + 7000) ITIS FIRSTOB WITH THEN
    FIRSTOB WITH TO IO000
6) UNTIL ZERO? FIRSTOB WITH REPEAT
7) FIRSTOB 9999 TO WITH
8) UNTIL ZERO? FIRSTOB 9999

Now all 8 of these 'command lines' must be seperate to each other. DO NOT put them all on the same line!

And for Special 'B' our REMOVE ALL process we only have two lines, and it's OK for each piece of information in line 2 to follow each other, it works just fine as it is!

I) IF ZERO? FIRSTOB IO000 THEN MESSAGE K NEWCOM

Message 'K' = 'But, you're not wearing anyhting to be able to remove!'

2) IF FIRSTOB IO000 THEN REPEAT LF MESSAGE I MESSAGE (FIRSTOB IO000 + 7000) ITIS FIRSTOB IO000 THEN FIRSTOB IO000 TO WITH UNTIL ZERO? FIRSTOB IO000

I've used room IO000 as our 'worn' room because it's an un-creatable room number, ie, 9999 is maximum! But even though you don't need to create it, you can still use it for our WEAR/REMOVE routines, and I know I haven't really explained any of the above to you, but I knew these routines would take up far too much room if there was a lot of explaining to do! But, if anyone has any queries at all, doesn't matter how big or small, try writing to me either through Chris, or at the address below...

6 HEATHERSLAW ROAD, FENHAM, NEWCASTLE UPON TYNE, NE5 2QJ.

These so far include the COLOUR/TOPCOL commands, using 'A' COLOUR 'RGB' ('Red, Green, Blue') and 'A' TOPCOL 'RGB'. Now if the number you put into 'A', in the above commands, is divisable by 4 (ie, is 4, 8, 12, or 16, etc), then this controls BOTH the background and the text colours together, making them both the same 'RGB' colour. If 'A' is 0 (zero) then this controls JUST the back- ground colour on its own, and any other number in 'A' controls JUST the text colour on its own!

The WITH command, which lists a player's carried objects, is actually a room number, ie, room number -1 (by default), so logically the command LIST -1 should be exactly the same as LIST WITH, and 'object no' IN -1 should be just the same as CARRIED 'object number', etc. Except they aren't! Because you can't have a room number for 'object' IN 'room no.' below 1, as STAC prints a 'Room not found' error message, ie, room number -1 hasn't been created, and you can't create a room -1 as STAC prints error message 'Zero not allowed'! So the instructions on page 22 of the STAC manual, which read...

   "It (meaning the WITH command) is, as mentioned before, a room which
   moves around with you, and is, by default, given the number -1. If
   you wish to have multiple inventories, like one for your pockets, and
   one for your backpack, this can be achieved by changing the value of
   WITH to, say, -2 for your backpack inventory"

...are complete rubbish! You might be able to move an object to rooms -1 and -2, but you cannot check to see if they <u>are</u>, or <u>are not</u> there, and you cannot LIST the contents of rooms -1, -2, etc, nor can you alter the room number of WITH, as it says above, either, as SETWITH only 'sets' the number of objects being carried NOT the room number of WITH!! So much for testing!?

If anybody's interested in getting in touch, you know what they say, a problem shared is a problem halved! The address is...

8 HEATHERSLAW ROAD, FENHAM, NEWCASTLE UPON TYNE, NE5 2QJ.

I've been sent an interesting batch of
Polish magazines from the computer world
by a Polish reader, Wojciech Heczko. He
very kindly waited to buy the latest
issues of what he considers are the
best magazines available in Poland.
An immediate impression I got is how
the printing is not as good as the
highly glossy publications we're used
to over here, and I doubt that any of
them give away free disks or cassettes
on the cover. Having said that though,
the contents were definitely not
lacking, and in a couple of cases
maybe even the sort of thing missing
in today's UK market. All the mags
showed a keen enthusiasm for not
only games, but programming and
hardware too. (Anyone remember the
first few issues of 'Your Spectrum'?)
I find our own magazines have been
diminished by corporate planning
and corruptive business strategy.
In other words, the big boys have
taken over, pushing out too much of
the amateur spirit of the home user,
which is still healthily evident in
the Polish computer mags, with a
few exceptions. For instance, one
magazine called 'Komputer' is just
like 'Popular Computing Weekly',
only much fatter! (And wider.)

It uses the same 'newspaper'
(non-glossy) style, and similar
DTP printouts for illustrations,
plus that 'clubby' feel - you
get the impression it's run by
enthusiasts like yourself - not
a big conglomerate who don't
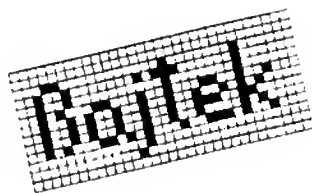
really have anything to do with home computers at all. Quite a few pages are in colour, but it's mostly black and white. Recommended – that is, if you can read Polish!

The other goodie has to be 'Bajtek', a wide format (and this time glossy!) magazine packed with hardware reviews and games. For instance, it reviews a range of personal organisers, a scanner, and CDTV discs, all very professionally illustrated and reviewed. For example, the scanner review lists the techincal data, shows three different printouts, has an annotated screendump of the program in action, plus a list of the plusses and minuses they found. The programming articles cover the Spectrum, IBM, Atari ST/E and the Amstrad, though oddly not Amiga. There's a page with three listings for Pascal, a BASIC listing for Spectrums, a telecommunications package demonstrated, and so on.

'Top Secret' is the only mag to concentrate solely on games, and is surprisingly lavish with masses of full-colour dumps. My issue had reviews for 'Another World', 'Moonstone', 'Terminator 2', all for Amiga, ST and PC (where relevant), but also two reviews for the Atari XL/XE! Namely 'A.D. 2044' and 'Kloss'. Then back to the 16-bits for 'Warlords', Hugo', 'Populous II' 'F-117A' and so on. But only a few (small) reviews for the Spectrum and Commodore 64. The review graphics also illustrare room for the Amstrad, plus which
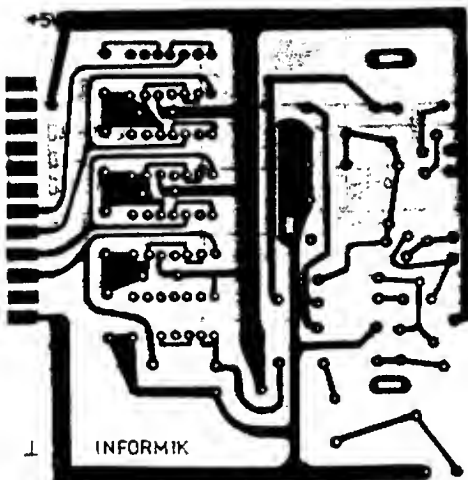

Komputer u pracy
※ Programy użytkowe
▤ Ślad na papierze
🔍 Test "Komputera"
▯ Varia
⚕ Test "Komputera"

INFORMIK

graphics system the PC uses - "Herc /
CGA EGA VGA", with the appropriate ones
highlighted. There's also a huge map
and hints for 'Electro Body', then
several small hints for a wide range of
games, but no adventure ones! (Nor any
adventures reviewed in any of these
magazines, but I can't say if that's
a deliberate policy, or just a reflect-
ion of the market generally.) However
there's a review of 'Monkey Island II'
which strangely lists the Atari in its
available formats - do they know some-
thing we don't?

According to Wojciech, 'Top Secret'
is "almost the second best selling
mag" in Poland, and he thinks 'Bajtek'
might be the No.I. But 'Komputer', so
he says, "was the best, but they've
changed it into 'I6-bit only', so I
don't buy it any more".

We could certainly do with all
three of these over here, but not
the others Wojciech sent me. 'IKS'
(Informatyka Komputery Systemy)
looks like they printed it on old
toilet paper, with horrid printing.
To be fair though, the contents are
good, with some simple BASIC listings
for Spectrum and Amstrad 6I28. (And
other types not named!) Plus a look
at the circuits of some mysterious
machine, and a Workstations review.
'Informik' is better quality, but
all about hardware, again with
circuit diagrams! Both this mag
and 'Komputer' look at the CeBit
computer show in Hanover. (Lots of
hardware shots in 'Informik'.)

Alas (?) Wojciech tells me
'IKS', 'Informik' and 'Komputer'
are no longer publisned. (I
wonder why!)

TECHNIK

Informik

MAGAZYN KOMPUTEROWY
MLODEGO TECHNIKA
NR II [10] ROCZNIK III
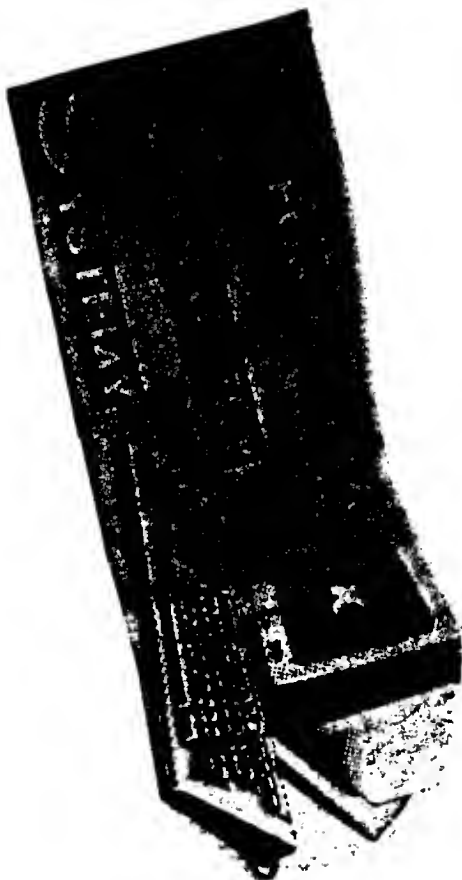
;We now come to the compressed
text library. The first byte
is the one used to represent the
compressed word, this is followed
by the compressed text, and is
finally followed by OFFH to
terminate the compressed word.
Don't forget, when you see
* replace it by typing a space.

COMDAT

```
DEFB 0A5H          ;The byte that
                    replaces the text
DEFM "the*"         ;The text that is
                    compressed
DEFB 0FFH          ;The terminating
                    byte
DEFB 0A6H

DEFM "ing*"

DEFB 0FFH

DEFB 0A7H

DEFM "and*"

DEFB 0FFH

DEFB 0A8H

DEFM "You*"

DEFB 0FFH

DEFB 0A9H

DEFM "you*"

DEFB 0FFH

DEFB 0AAH

DEFM "are*"

DEFB 0FFH

DEFB 0ABH

DEFM "end*"

DEFB 0FFH

DEFB 0ACH
```

```
DEFM "all*"

DEFB 0FFH

DEFB 0ADH

DEFM "and"

DEFB 0FFH

DEFB 0AEH

DEFM "into"

DEFB 0FFH

DEFB 0AFH

DEFM "not"

DEFB 0FFH

DEFB 0B0H

DEFM "outh"

DEFB 0FFH

DEFB 0B1H

DEFM "orth"

DEFB 0FFH

DEFB 0B2H

DEFM "ast"

DEFB 0FFH

DEFB 0B3H

DEFM "est"

DEFB 0FFH

DEFB 0B4H

DEFM "ght"

DEFB 0FFH

DEFB 0B5H

DEFM "to*"

DEFB 0FFH
```

```
DEFB 0B6H              DEFM "ly*"
DEFM "at*"             DEFB 0FFH
DEFB 0FFH              DEFB 0C1H
DEFB 0B7H              DEFM "de*"
DEFM "is*"             DEFB 0FFH
DEFB 0FFH              DEFB 0C2H
DEFB 0B8H              DEFM "ce*"
DEFM "th*"             DEFB 0FFH
DEFB 0FFH              DEFB 0C3H
DEFB 0B9H              DEFM "he*"
DEFM "on*"             DEFB 0FFH
DEFB 0FFH              DEFB 0C4H
DEFB 0BAH              DEFM "A*"
DEFM "er*"             DEFB 0FFH
DEFB 0FFH              DEFB 0C5H
DEFB 0BBH              DEFM "a*"
DEFM "ed*"             DEFB 0FFH
DEFB 0FFH              DEFB 0C6H
DEFB 0BCH              DEFM ".*"
DEFM "es*"             DEFB 0FFH
DEFB 0FFH              DEFB 0C7H
DEFB 0BDH              DEFM ",*"
DEFM "en*"             DEFB 0FFH
DEFB 0FFH              DEFB 0C8H
DEFB 0BEH              DEFM "of"
DEFM "el*"             DEFB 0FFH
DEFB 0FFH              DEFB 0C9H
DEFB 0BFH              DEFM "he"
DEFM "le*"             DEFB 0FFH
DEFB 0FFH              DEFB 0CAH
DEFB 0C0H              DEFM "nd"
```

```
DEFB  0FFH            DEFB  0D5H
DEFB  0CBH            DEFM  "it"
DEFM  "er"            DEFB  0FFH
DEFB  0FFH            DEFB  0D6H
DEFB  0CCH            DEFM  "th"
DEFM  "es"            DEFB  0FFH
DEFB  0FFH            DEFB  0D7H
DEFB  0CDH            DEFM  "st"
DEFM  "et"            DEFB  0FFH
DEFB  0FFH            DEFB  0D8H
DEFB  0CEH            DEFM  "le"
DEFM  "ey"            DEFB  0FFH
DEFB  0FFH            DEFB  0D9H
DEFB  0CFH            DEFM  "to"
DEFM  "ee"            DEFB  0FFH
DEFB  0FFH            DEFB  0DAH
DEFB  0D0H            DEFM  "on"
DEFM  "oo"            DEFB  0FFH
DEFB  0FFH            DEFB  0DBH
DEFB  0D1H            DEFM  "ge"
DEFM  "ds"            DEFB  0FFH
DEFB  0FFH            DEFB  0DCH
DEFB  0D2H            DEFM  "al"
DEFM  "ls"            DEFB  0FFH
DEFB  0FFH            DEFB  0DDH
DEFB  0D3H            DEFM  "el"
DEFM  "in"            DEFB  0FFH
DEFB  0FFH            DEFB  0DEH
DEFB  0D4H            DEFM  "gs"
DEFM  "is"            DEFB  0FFH
DEFB  0FFH            DEFB  0DFH
```

```
        DEFM "il"                       DEFB 0FFH
    DEFB 0FFH                        DEFB 0EAH
    DEFB 0E0H                        DEFM "ea"
        DEFM "ss"                       DEFB 0FFH
    DEFB 0FFH                        DEFB 0EBH
    DEFB 0E1H                        DEFM "ou"
        DEFM "an"                       DEFB 0FFH
    DEFB 0FFH                        DEFB 0ECH
    DEFB 0E2H                        DEFM "ro"
        DEFM "as"                       DEFB 0FFH
    DEFB 0FFH                        DEFB 0EDH
    DEFB 0E3H                        DEFM "ow"
        DEFM "nt"                       DEFB 0FFH
    DEFB 0FFH                        DEFB 0EEH
    DEFB 0E4H                        DEFM "un"
        DEFM "ps"                       DEFB 0FFH
    DEFB 0FFH                        DEFB 0EFH
    DEFB 0E5H                        DEFM "ts"
        DEFM "at"                       DEFB 0FFH
    DEFB 0FFH                        DEFB 0F0H
    DEFB 0E6H                        DEFM "ad"
        DEFM "gr"                       DEFB 0FFH
    DEFB 0FFH                        DEFB 0F1H
    DEFB 0E7H                        DEFM "re"
        DEFM "br"                       DEFB 0FFH
    DEFB 0FFH                        DEFB 0F2H
    DEFB 0E8H                        DEFM "ch"
        DEFM "sh"                       DEFB 0FFH
    DEFB 0FFH                        DEFB 0F3H
    DEFB 0E9H                        DEFM "ck"
        DEFM "ar"                       DEFB 0FFH
```

```
DEFB  0F4H                          DEFM  "y*"

DEFM  "ir"                          DEFB  0FFH

DEFB  0FFH

DEFB  0F5H                                    DATEND

DEFM  "ov"

DEFB  0FFH                          DEFB  07FH   ;Just so you can find it
                                                  easily in the listing
DEFB  0F6H

DEFM  "te"                                    T.COL

DEFB  0FFH

DEFB  0F7H                          DEFB  0      ;Temporary stor for the
                                                 column pos'n.
DEFM  "be"

DEFB  0FFH                                    OBJTAB

DEFB  0F8H

DEFM  "am"                          EQU  64C3H   ;The start of OBJTAB

DEFB  0FFH

DEFB  0F9H

DEFM  "or"

DEFB  0FFH

DEFB  0FAH

DEFM  "ra"

DEFB  0FFH

DEFB  0FBH

DEFM  "ca"

DEFB  0FFH

DEFB  0FCH

DEFM  "e*"

DEFB  0FFH

DEFB  0FDH

DEFM  "s*"

DEFB  0FFH

DEFB  0FEH
```


⟨H'93⟩

L E T T E R S

It's a while since we've had room to print some letters, so accept our apologies if these are a little (ahem) out of date! We start with Gerald Kellett from Stamford, writing about adventure creators...

Actually my last 'letter' was meant to be a short article, but I forgot to supply a title for it, and Chris probably could not think of a witty one ('OOPs Adventuring' perhaps?), he could have made it the first entry in "Reader's Page", which effectively it was. It was probably also the first contribution by the Disc-Mail (D-Mail) method, and was included as a block of text in a quite long 'ST Writer' file, which is probably how this came about.

For others wanting to send things in to this magazine by D-Mail, a few comments: first I must clarify that the MS-DOS discs must be normal 720K, not HD (1.44M), secondly if you've got an ST then you don't have to bother about this (obviously! *(I use an STE, that's why! - Ed)*), thirdly a 3½" disc can just be crammed into a Jiffy MM000, or more easily into a slightly larger padded bag, or in my case sent in a home made corrugated card disc-mailer, and can be sent at normal letter rates (at 60g or under), and you can get approx. 400 A4 page equivalents of text on a single disc (enough for a novel!) and think how much that would cost to send using paper! So you can save on postage, save paper, re-use the disc, and as in my case re-use my rather ingenious disc-mailer (complete with ready to use return address label).

This also opens-up the possibility of our own small scale Adventure Writers Public Domain & Shareware Exchange, (for the ST anyway); contribute something with your articles / letters on disc, get something back on the returned disc.

I must comment on Ian Eveleigh's view of the problem of there being no decent Adventure Creators (ACs) for 16-bit computers - while I could not get on with GAC on my (now defunct) Spectrum, and so did not get STAC - there is at least one commercial AC package, albeit not exactly what most people wanted, which was the promised ST, PC and Amiga versions of PAW with portability across the formats.

And that is the crux of the matter, not the lack of ACs - commercial or PD - but that there is not one AC with graphics capabilites available on all the most popular 16-bit computers, and without that - which would make writing an adventure a more commercially viable proposition due to the increased user-base - things are unlikely to improve.

AGT is available for the PC (which is where it originated) and ST, and since it was compiled from Pascal, porting it to other computers (Amiga, MAC for instance) is possible, and ought to have come about by now. It, however, is text only, and is, to my thinking, overly complicated (or at least the manual makes it seem so).

Using STOS/AMOS allows some portability and graphics, music, sound, but until there is PCOS (and possibly also MACOS) this will not fully fit the bill. (Anyone know what the OS in STOS stands for, can't be Operating System, something in French I presume, as that is where JAWX it's programmers come from). *(No, I think it IS 'Operating System'. - Ed)* Even with an 'across-all-formats' AC, most adventures would still probably only be profitable as 'Licenceware' (commercial distribution with no frills by PDLs).

Everyone heard about Atari's new machine the FALCON? (Well you ought to almost certainly by the time this issue appears!) Now there's a machine for adventures, full multi-media allowing true video with computer overlay and high quality digital sound, fully interactive CD with SCSI2 (soon to be a version with built-in CD) for video/sound/data.

A little comment on the back-cover blurb. Chris do you really

mean Bi-monthly (twice a month), possibly bimonthly (every two months)? But upto now 'Coder' has been bi-annual (twice a year), is that what you mean? *(Ed - It was bi-monthly when I alternated between 'Coder' and 'Adventure Workshop'. I meant that it appeared once every two months. Of course the reality was bi-annually!!)* Bit confusing these bi-monthly / bimonthly, bi-annual / biannual (every two years), especially as most people seem to use the hyphenated and un-hyphenated versions interchangeably for either meaning, perhaps the twice within a period should be semi or hemi (both mean half), eg: semi-monthly, hemi-annual (ok so it may be mixed roots but it avoids confusion).

Steve Clay, I thought the moving bits on an analog clock were hands not fingers? (Although that is a better description of them).

Talking of whom, Steve writes in from South Wirral, about a "product of immense excellence"...

I must agree with Tom Frost that there is a difference between using PAW and actually programming an adventure. Gilsoft have produced a product of immense excellence, indeed most adventures written with PAW are superior to other non-utility products. The response time of PAW makes playing Level 9 games very trying. The difficulties involved in using machine code (m/c), let's face it BASIC is so slow, are vast. You have to worry about everything, from clearing the screen to printing a full stop. The registers need constant watch. I have used m/c and I know how awkward it can be. One mistake in m/c normally (99 times out of 100) means the computer locks up. A reset and a reload follow. A mistake with PAW just means that the puzzle doesn't work or the wrong message is printed. Gilsoft have made our lives much easier.

Robin Rawson-Tetley from Rotherham writes about writing...

Sorry I haven't written for so long, so my profuse apologies go out, sorry, sorry, sorry (etc). Please find enclosed the first article in a few that I've done about adventures in 6510 assembly - yes, that's right I program in that too!
    I would be grateful if you could discontinue the Spectrum BASIC jobbies and not use the ones you have due to a slight accident - I used to copy the program listing from the screen and then type it up and explain etc. When, shock!, horror! the tape that I kept the program on corrupted and I accidentally taped over the backup copy (what an idiot) with my performance on the local radio station!
    Anyway, sorry for all this (and could I say sorry to Stephen Groves too, for pinching his program name?).
    I was dead chuffed (ahem) to receive issue 20 and it was as scintillating as ever (cheque enclosed for the next issue).
    For the last few months, I've been writing a C64 machine code adventure creator which fair hammers GAC into the floor, but it is only 60% complete and has some great features (10-word recognition, sentence breaking, 50% text compression, 62-channel stereo symphonic orchestra in the background, 1,093,348,543 coloured graphics optional, ok, ok, so I lied about the last two), and I wanted to ask how many people responded to your C64 coverdisk. Why? Because I want to do one, and make sure that it wouldn't be too expensive for me in disks! (Although my prog won't be finished for a few months.) *(Ed - forget it! I think I had only ONE request for my free C64 disk offered a while ago in this mag, and that was from you!!)*

Next, Tim Kemp of Norwich writes, about an idea he has...

I've been stirred into action by Ian Eveleigh's letter in Adventure Coder 19 who said that he was fed up of waiting for someone to produce

a decent adventure authoring system for the 16-bit machines. He
complained, and quite rightly so, that Gilsoft had abandoned us, or to
be more precise don't seem to want to bother doing 16-bit conversions
of the PAW or even the Quill. (Yes, even the Quill would go down well
1 think!)

To me, it does seem a hell of a shame that Gilsoft no longer have
any plans to spread their marvellous adventure systems over more
formats. The last I heard was that the ST version of PAW was nearing
completion and an Amiga version would follow depending on the success
of the ST version... that was a couple of years ago now, and still we
wait.

1 suppose you could petition Gilsoft, but would that do any good?
They seem to be dead as far as adventures go nowadays, so perhaps we
had better focus our attention (or send our petitions) elsewhere.
Before 1 tell you where I think we should be looking, how about if 100
people all chip-in £50 and we hire a programmer to do the job? Is that
being too simplistic or what? Doesn't anyone out there reading this
know a decent programmer who is willing to turn our ideas for an
adventure writing system into reality? God, I would have thought that
if we could even come up with £1000 then there must be a half decent
programmer out there willing to do the job. 1'm personally willing to
stake £50 in such a project (for the PC version at any rate). Anyone
care to join me? Let's face it, you'd probably be asked to pay between
£35 - £50 if you bought a PC version of PAW, so hiring someone to do
the programming job the way you want it done would surely be a good
investment? We'd also reap the rewards of being able to sell the end
product - the members of the co-op who put money into the project
getting a royalty on each copy sold! Looking a bit deeper, dare I even
suggest that £5000 would possibly be enough to acquire the rights and
get the programming done on a PC version of the PAW? Okay, enough of
the suppositions, here's my suggestions for another course of
action...

Remember Incentive Software? Remember GAC? Course you do. GAC-ed
adventures are still being written, and the same goes for games on its
16-bit incarnation - STAC! Now I'm not suggesting for one minute that
STAC/GAC appears on the Amiga or PC in its present form, but can you
see any reason why a company like Incentive shouldn't develop it into
something brilliant and then release it (via Domark presumably?) into
what would be virgin territory. They'd have the market cornered from
day one as they'd have NO competition whatsoever. Yes, I know there
are one or two other 16-bit adventure writing systems lurking out
there, but they suffer from not having a programming 'team' working on
them and multi-thousand pound backing!

Let's look at the facts as I see them: 1... Incentive (through
Domark) are huge! 2... They have got GAC/STAC (which sold well in the
past) to build on and 3... They have already successfully marketed
(via Domark) a product that is, to all intents and purposes, totally
useless and which has an adventure-ish theme. 1 am referring to the 3D
Construction Kit. Now Domark/Incentive have decided to sell what is
essentially the same item in a version 2 format with a 'virtual
reality' label tagged on for good measure or, to be more precise, for
good marketing reasons - virtual reality being the current 'buzzword'
amongst the computer fraternity so is a good marketing ploy. From the
advertising blurb 1've seen the 3D Construction Kit version 2.0
doesn't even pretend to be anything other than a canvas on which you
can create a world you can fly or walk through. Can it even create
games? This means that if Incentive can sell something that has little
use other than designing the ideal home in a 'virtual' setting then
surely they'd have no problems promoting something as useful as an
adventure creation system in which you get to design virtual words in
any setting imaginable? (Imagination being the only factor that limits
what you can possibly do with an adventure writing system.)

The reason I call the 3D Con Kit 'useless' is because it is - especially when compared to something like GAC or STAC. Can those of you reading this who have seen a 3D Con Kit game say it was any good? Can those of you reading this who have bought the 3D Con Kit say they have got much joy out of it, and wouldn't you much rather have an adventure writing system to play around with instead? Even though some 3D Con Kit games have made it to PD libraries the PD reviewers in the glossies tend to say things like "This 3D Con Kit game is pretty much like all the other 3D Con Kit games". What that means is that they all look the same, have limited game-play, limited appeal, limited lastability and will probably end up being used as a blank disk in the end. Nearly all the 16-bit PD adventures, on the other hand, get good reviews. Imagine Zenobi, Compass, Tartan, The Guild and River Software adventures (to name but a few) being converted to Amiga, ST and PC format! Great games would reach a new audience and immediately an adventure construction kit (for want of a better Incentive-like title) would instantly be more attractive, more useful and more marketable than the 3D Con Kit. Am 1 right or wrong? Look at how well the Quill and PAW sold. Look at how well an inferior system like GAC sold (inferior to the PAW at any rate). Wouldn't a well-designed 16-bit adventure writing system be a sure-fire winner?

I've decided to write to Incentive (c/o Domark) and see what they have to say on the subject, and I suggest that those of you who are wondering why no adventure writing system has come from that stable should do likewise. Perhaps they think adventure writing (or playing) has a limited appeal? Perhaps they feel the future lies in providing a utility that allows the user to put geometric items on a screen and let the user pretend they are in a virtual world? The best way to my mind to pretend you are somewhere else is to play an adventure - not wander round a land of coloured blocks getting bored out of your skull after the first 5 minutes.

Tim Kemp - C.F.A.W.S. (the Campaign For a (16-bit) Adventure Writing System), 36 Globe Place, Norwich, Norfolk, NR2 2SQ.

Martin Bela from Derby writes about spelling...

I agree with most of the points made by Steve Clay concerning adventure standards (see issue 16 page 8); however, his comments about highlighting token words during conversations would seem to suggest that adventure players are somewhat dim. After all, isn't that half the fun; finding-out what a character will talk about?

The programmer should of course ensure that replies from characters give a clue as to what to talk about.

Spelling is another problem. A few minutes spent with a dictionary would make many good games even better. I wonder how many gaves have NO spelling mistakes? I am writing my first adventure (on a CPC6128) using the Protext and ADLAN ROMs. This means that I can let the Prospell ROM check all my spelling. I've not used any other adventure creator so I don't know how easy it is to check the spelling of GAC-ed or PAW-ed games, but a spelling dictionary is fairly quick to use. The only problem is that (if today's educational standards are anything to go by) a lot of the writers will need to check everything over four letters long!

Similarly, few adventures have the correct style and presentation.
For instance...

"Yes." he replies. "We have some rope."

                ...is incorrect: the split quotation has a capital
letter in the middle.

The correct way is...

"Yes," he replies, "we have some rope."

Another point of confusion is the correct placing of an apostrophe. If
you wish to indicate the possessive case of a singular noun, *(Do what?
- Thick Ed)* then the apostrophe should go before the last letter,
eg:-

The farmer's wife gives you some food.

If you're indicating the possessive case of a plural noun, then the
apostrophe goes after the last letter, eg:-

The two farmers' wives talk amongst themselves.

All clear?...I hope so.

The single most important feature of an adventure game is character
interaction. *(You sure about that? - Ed. I'd have said atmosphere was
more important, and many games have you solving puzzles on your own,
with many not even having a 'SAY TO' command to interact with
characters at all!)* Adventures can be very boring if there's no-one to
talk to; so put plenty of characters in your games. If you're
including graphics *(Aaargghh! - Most readers.)* then do some pictures
of your characters. It's nice to actually see the person you're
talking to.
    I think that too many people place too much importance on the
complexity of the parser. After all, is it really necessary for the
computer to be able to understand a single input of ten or twenty
words? I think not! A parser that understands two or three word inputs
is usually all that's necessary. It is important however, that the
parser has a comprehensive vocabulary; so that the player does not
have to spend a lot of time finding exactly the right verb to use.
    Why don't writers pay more attention to the finishing touches?
The game I'm writing at the moment has two text windows: one for the
player's input, and one for the descriptions etc. These windows are
bordered by suitable graphics, such as stone pillars, vines, and
snakes. Does anyone else do this? *(Yes, me - Ed. My C64 adventure
'Runaway' (written with GAC) had a border decorated by animals and
leaves, etc. These changed colour to suit the current graphic of the
room you were in! So there.)* The nearest I've seen is the bit of
border used in 'Lord Of The Rings'. Again, perhaps this isn't possible
with most adventure creators, but you can with ADLAN, and of course
with BASIC.
    In conclusion then, I guess that the standard of adventures will
follow that of education; computer programming skills will improve (no
doubt making parsers even more complex), and basic English grammar
skills will decline, leading to wurdz spelt wrong, apostroph'es in the
wrong place, and capital letters where they shouldn't Be!

John Ferris from Coventry writes about his recent activities...

Thank you for the latest issue of Adventure Coder which came, I must
admit, as a surprise. Since I had not heard from Coder for so long, I
had assumed that it had quietly gone to magazine heaven... but I like
to be proved wrong in cases such as this.
    To be quite honest I have taken a bit of a break from adventures
in general. Since Probe changed hands from Mandy Rodrigues to whoever,
I have not been a subscriber. I felt that the content of Probe was no
longer of great interest to me and the changeover was a logical point

at which to cease subscription.

I have not been idle, though. Have you heard of the magazine 'Alternaties' edited by Mark Rose? If you have and are a subscriber, then you will have seen what I've been up to. Alternaties is a magazine based on science-fiction / fantasy / cyberpunk etc and publishes stories (short and otherwise) by unknown authors such as myself (although I use the term 'author' in the broadest possible sense in my case). Stories are easier to write than adventure games!

George March in his PD round-up mentioned Amiga-venture in rather vague terms. The program is a form of utility written in AmigaBasic which is not very good, ie: don't bother.

ADL is advertised as disk V950 in the PDSOFT advert in 'Amiga Computing'. Disks cost £3 each, address is 1 Bryant Avenue, Southend on sea, Essex, SS1 2YD.

Alternatively, if you can get hold of a catalogue of all the Fred Fish disks (17-Bit software 1st Floor offices, 2/8 Market Street, Wakefield, West Yorkshire, WF1 1DH ((0924) 366982) will probably help) I am certain a version of ADL is on a Fish disk, less than number 400.

Writing about the SAM computer, Phil Glover from Birmingham has this to say...

Thanks for the latest issue of Adventure Coder, which I always like reading, even if I still don't understand too much of it. (I intend to start learning to use an adventure writing utility after Christmas, 1 promise!)

I'm currently compiling issue 11 of the 'Sam Adventure Club' disk magazine, and I can honestly say that the club is doing very well indeed. We've a circulation of about 60, and we get plenty of letters from our readers. Adventure players are a rare breed, and SAM owners are probably even rarer, so perhaps we're all the more enthusiastic because we're so thin on the ground, and need to keep in touch with each other for survival.

Despite the rapid decline of the Spectrum, SAM has continued in its humble way, with keen users writing software for fun rather than profit. Of course, we'd all like to see SAM sell in greater numbers, to boost the software sales, but we know better than to expect any remarkable increase in SAM's market share. Luckily, SAM is a very accessible and friendly machine to use, and to program. A SAM modem is due out, as well as another clutch of software titles and a final version of a currently-available DTP package for SAM.

SAM certainly seems to be shaping up well as a computer that's ideal for adventures. The latest SAM adventure to be released was 'The Occult Connection', by David Munden, and was written using the SAM Adventure System (SAS). I must try and get David's permission to send you some of his articles he's written about SAS for our club disk, as they may be of interest to your readers. *(Please do! - Ed. I could do with 60 extra readers!)* SAS can be used to create adventures using 32, 42 or 64 column text, complete with SAM's high-quality Mode 4 graphics (no attribute clash problems with SAM!). David Munden's adventure features his own 'preference' routine, where the player can choose the screen/text colours from any of SAM's 128 colour palette, and also select any of two dozen fonts, saving their choice to disk for the next time. *(Hurrah! - Ed. If only other programs were as user-friendly!!)* David had never written an adventure before Occult Connection, and he's certainly done well for a first effort. It's impressed me so much that I am determined to have a go at an SAS-written adventure of my own. Since the game was released, he's written some very impressive routines for SAS and has featured them in his SAS column on our club disk. Some were inspired by similar routines used in PAW. Naturally, the code and programming is very

different, but the end result is almost identical at times.

Oddly enough, I've heard of two more adventure writing utilities
being written for SAM. One is being written using the extended and
very powerful SAM MasterBASIC, (don't laugh! SAM's BASIC and
MasterBASlC are of a very high standard, and were written by Dr Andy
Wright, who also wrote the SAM ROM, and BetaBASlC and BetaDOS for the
Spectrum) and the other utility is also BASlC-based, with machine code
sections (l think!). The latter utility is already available in an
early evolutionary form, and looks very easy to use, although it's not
very versatile yet. However, the programmer has great plans for the
final version. I've already seen two games written using this second
utility, and they play quite well.

Our disk magazine now costs £2.50, but we make sure we have at
least 700K of material per issue, and sometimes much, much more. So
much, in fact, that we've had to do two double disk issues (same
price) to get all the stuff on. This price tag allows us to buy games
(fixed royalties) for each issue. Issue 11 featured 'The Lost Tomb Of
Ananka', and we've lined up Jack Lockerby's 'The Dark Tower' for issue
12. Other games featured so far include 'Grue-knapped' and 'The Taxman
Cometh'. These are all converted to SAM disk allowing positions to be
stored on disk, instead of tape (YIPPEE!). We'll be putting a
SAM-specific text-graphics game on an issue very soon.

Despite the encouraging interest in SAM adventure utilities, I
still dream of seeing a SAM version of PAW, and if you have any
influence with the Gilsoft bunch, please put in a kind word for the
SAM! The idea of a 500K PAW adventure would be enough to make me
actually learn to use PAW, at long last.

One last point I'd like to make is regarding the 'Adventure Link'
review in Coder: both George March and your good self seem to have
doubts that Brian Gaff exists (see top of page 13). l can assure you
that Brian does indeed exist, as I've spoken to him on several
occasions. He markets hardware for both the SAM and the Spectrum (eg:
a kit to convert a Speccy +2a into a 'normal' Speccy +2) as well as
PRODOS, which is a SAM utility allowing CP/M 2.2 software to be run on
SAM. Just in case you've any doubts, l also exist. (The phrase 'as
large as life and twice as ugly' springs to mind!)

Thanks again for the latest Coder, and it's good to see such a
mixture of articles across all the formats. Please keep the contents
as adventure-related as much as is reasonably possible, though!
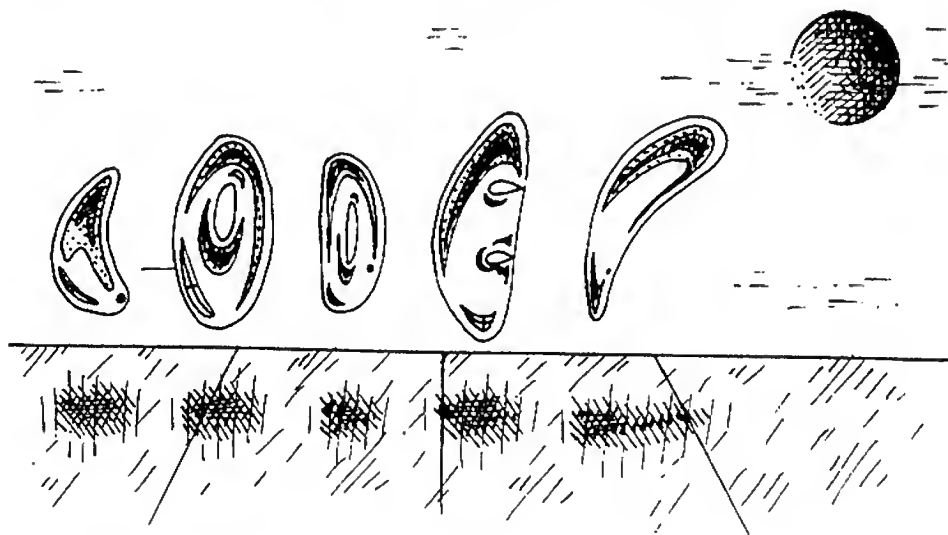
BASIC text compression

by Robin Rawson-Tetley

While assessing my adventure program thoroughly, I noticed that
there was something that it lacked - text compression. Surely
this must be impossible from BASIC ? but I remained undaunted.

The first thing to think about is "How can I squash the text into
less space?". I thought about this for quite a while and came up
with two approaches. The first of which is shown here.

The thing that makes text compression difficult from BASIC in my
eyes is the fact that text has no pattern to it - look at a load
of ASCII codes representing a sentence and there is no obvious
pattern to it at all. The second thing is that BASIC is slow, and
decompressing something is not quick at all in BASIC.

Then I looked carefully at text and something hit me (ouch!). All
text, no matter what it is contains spaces, so if I can find a
way to remove all the spaces, I'll make a saving.

The way I came up with is that you remove the spaces, and add 96
to the ASCII value before it. Why 96? because 96+32 (32 being the
lowest printable character) = 128 - above all text and
punctuation. The computer sees this and thinks "Ah Ha! this value
is greater than 127, so I subtract 96 to get the proper letter
and know to add a space to the end".

This is quite reasonable, and in practice gives a compression
rate of 17% - increasing with longer sentences.

Let me explain compression rate, when I say 17%, I mean that the
amount of space occupied by the text has been REDUCED by 17%, not
that the text fits into 17% of it's previous space!

This is a Spectrum listing for this theory (with the shortest,
fastest, bestest, four-line(!) word wrap possible in BASIC on the
end - revel in it's speed!)

If you wish to add it to my adventure system, I shall explain how
to use it when I get to the relevant part (about part 10!)

```
 10 PRINT "BASIC Text Compressor"
 20 POKE 23617,238: INPUT "E - Enter Text or""V - view
compressed text:"; LINE x$
 30 IF x$<>"e" AND x$<>"v" THEN GO TO 20
 40 IF x$="v" THEN GO TO 200
 50 INPUT "Enter text:"; LINE a$
 55 LET o$=a$
 60 FOR f=1 TO LEN a$
 70 IF a$(f)=" " THEN LET z$=a$(f+1 TO ): LET a$=a$( TO f-1): LET
a$(f-1)=CHR$(CODE(a$(f-1))+96(: LET a$=a$+z$: GO TO 60
 80 NEXT f
 90 GO TO 20
 200 PRINT "Original Text:"'o$'"Length:"; LEN o$
 205 PAUSE 0
```

```
210 PRINT "Compressed Text:"'a$'"Length:"; LEN a$
212 PAUSE 0: CLS
215 PRINT'"Decompressed reads:-"
220 LET f$="": FOR f=1 TO LEN a$
221 IF CODE a$(f)<128 THEN LET f$=f$+a$(f): GO TO 225
223 IF CODE a$(f)>127 THEN LET f$=f$+CHR$(CODE(a$(f))-96+" "
226 NEXT f
227 GO SUB 250
230 PRINT '"Compression rate of: ";100-(((LEN a$)/(LEN o$)) *
100);"%"
240 GO TO 20
250 FOR f=32 TO 1 STEP -1
252 IF LEN f$<32 THEN PRINT f$: RETURN
254 IF f$(f)=" " THEN PRINT f$ ( TO f-1): LET f$=f$(f+1 TO ): GO
TO 250
255 NEXT f: PRINT "32 Sequential Characters": STOP
```

The program is relatively simple, and it's lines 220-226 which do
all the decompressing work, lines 250-255 are the word wrap I was
bragging about earlier, if you think it seems slow, you're wrong,
that's the decompressor you're waiting for, if you don't believe
me, put a long string into f$ containing something for wrapping,
and GO SUB 250, and it will be virtually as fast as a normal
PRINT statement.

The Ed's Favourite Albums of 1993...

 1) 'Rage Against The Machine' - Rage Against The Machine
 2) 'Vs' - Pearl Jam
 3) 'The Red Shoes' - Kate Bush
 4) 'Debut' - Björk
 5) 'Zooropa' - U2
 6) 'Impending Ascension' - Magellan
 7) 'Gold Against The Soul' - Manic Street Preachers
 8) 'Dream Harder' - The Waterboys
 9) 'Black Tie White Noise' - David Bowie
10) 'Counterparts' - Rush

The Ed's Favourite Singles of 1993...

 1) 'Moments Of Pleasure' - Kate Bush
 2) 'Venus As A Boy' - Björk
 3) 'Play Dead' - Björk
 4) 'Human Behaviour' - Björk
 5) 'Today Was A Good Day' - Ice Cube

Plus many more, such as Manic Street Preachers - 'From Despair To
Where' and 'La Tristesse Durera'; Stone Temple Pilots - 'Lush'; The
Waterboys - 'Glastonbury Song'; World Party - 'Is It Like Today' and
'Give It All Away'; Spin Doctors - 'Two Princes', 'Little Miss Can't
Be Wrong'; The Goats - 'Typical American'; Prince - 'Peach'; Aerosmith
- 'Eat The Rich'; Rage Against The Machine - 'Killing In The Name',
'Bombtrack' and 'Bullet In The Head'; Chaka Demus (?) & Pliers -
'Tease Me'; Pearl Jam - 'Go'; R.E.M. - 'The Sidewinder Sleeps Tonite',
'Nightswimming' and 'Find The River'; Faith No More - 'I'm Easy'; Pet
Shop Boys - 'I Wouldn't Normally Do This Kind Of Thing'; Cyndi Lauper
- 'That's What I Think'; Peter Gabriel - 'Steam', etc. etc!

***** BACK ISSUES BONANZA! *****

The Minion, our new sub-Editor (though 'tea-boy' seems more fitting)
has some good news!

In a bout of insanity, the Ed has decided to reduce the price of ALL
the back issues!!! He was seen mumbling around the office saying there
were too many of them and nobody wanted to buy any more or something.
I mean, just because you have to squeeze past piles of them to get in
and out the doors doesn't mean we've a lot of them... though the
office where I work for the Ed (otherwise known as the broom cupboard)
has seemed a bit spatially challenged recently. What with back issues,
brooms, mops AND a crowd of dancing girls dressed in satin, wearing
tiaras and trying to do the foxtrot (I think you're lying about the
last bit! - Ed), it's no wonder the Ed wants rid of the back issues!
So as I was saying, he's reduced 'em all... here's the list of the new
prices (for a single issue)...

Only £1.00! (If you live in Britain.)
Only £1.40! (If you live in Europe, but outside of Britain)
Only £1.85! (If you live in a Zone 1 country - that's places like
            Canada, Egypt, the Falklands, Saudi Arabia, USA, the
            Seychelles, etc.)
Only £1.95! (If you live in a Zone 2 country - that's New Zealand,
            Australia, etc.)

Payment is by the usual manner - cheques payable to "C.Hester", at the
usual address, or you can use a Postal Order, International Giro, or
British decimal stamps for small amounts. If you want more than one
back issue, then just mutliply the cost by the number of issues you
want - for example, if you want 5 issues, and you live in Egypt,
that's 5 times £1.85, equalling £9.25.

In other words, that's 50p OFF per issue!!! Oh yes, a
never-to-be-repeated offer, don't miss it, only so many copies left,
bananas only 39 a pound, get them while you can missus, only 39 a
pound! Come on, don't be shy now, get your bananas here, the finest
fruit stand in the country, the (That's enough! - Ed). Ahem. Where was
I? Oh yes, sorry about that. I get carried away sometimes - usually
when the dustbin men arrive and I've fallen asleep inside the bin...
(Eh?! - Ed)

Here's a quick rundown of the issues then...

ISSUE 1 - UTILITIES & ADD-ONS, GAC+ review, PAW (available exits), Z80
MACHINE CODE (Z80 overview), WHATEVER HAPPENED TO... 'Valley Of The
Source', GAC GRAPHICS (colour, perspective, ellipses, rectangles),
USEFUL ADDRESSES, etc.

ISSUE 2 - GAC (pokes, starting a game), GAC+ (pokes), PAW (parser,
vocabulary), Z80 MACHINE CODE (command input routine), WHATEVER
HAPPENED TO... sound-only games, STAC (starting), ADVENTURES
(storyline, writing), USEFUL ADDRESSES, UTILITIES & ADD-ONS, etc.

ISSUE 3 - THE A-Z OF RPG, PAW (cars, again, oops, find object,
overlays), GAC (doors), STAC (tips, list), SPECTRUM MACHINE CODE
(parser), USEFUL ADDRESSES, UTILITIES AVAILABLE, etc.

ISSUE 4 - PAW (inventory, get all, drop all, containers, objects in
mazes, taxis, exit printing, swear protection, again, oops, clocks,
add-ons), ADVENTURE COLUMNS reviewed, USEFUL ADDRESSES, GAC (inside
info), UTILITIES AVAILABLE, etc.

writing program), etc.

ISSUE 18 - ADLAN (pictures), TIPS (Easyscript on the CBM64), THINGY part 2, CREATING PUZZLES, etc.

ISSUE 19 - currently out of print! Sorry!

ISSUE 20 - STAC (animation, on-screen exits), THE TAXMAN CHRONICLES part 2, BASIC (strings), PUZZLES, 'ADVENTURE LINK 2' review, PD, THINGY part 4, AMOS (writing a game), PAW (Technical Guide), etc.

There are also back issues available for the four issues of 'Adventure Workshop' that were produced as a sister magazine to this one. They were primarily concerned with 16-bit computers, here's what was in them. (The price is exactly the same as the back issues of Coder above!)

ISSUE 1 - TALESPIN (thoughts), STAC (starting), PROGRAMMING VERSUS WRITING, AGT review, Z80/68000 MACHINE CODE (converting commands), STAC (thoughts), CES SHOW review, AMOS (parser, etc), 'THE BLAG' review, 'COMPUTER ADVENTURES - THE SECRET ART' review, etc.

ISSUE 2 - TALESPIN (starting), STAC (starting, User Routine Access Protocol by SEAN ELLIS (author of STAC!)), AMOS (parser, graphics), WRITING STYLES, ADVSYS review, HUMOUR IN GAMES, VIRTUAL REALITY, Z80/68000 MACHINE CODE (converting commands continued), etc.

ISSUE 3 - MAGNETIC SCROLLS exclusive interview!!!, STAC (writing a game, list of faults, exit printing), AMOS (data + editors), TALESPIN (running a game), ST AGT review, ADVENTURE STANDARDS, 68000 MACHINE CODE (addressing modes with table), HATRACK II review, etc.

ISSUE 4 - CREATING PUZZLES, MIKE GERRARD interview, STAC (object printing), TIPS (Star LC-10 printer), WRITING TIPS, HATRACK II details, GAMESCAPE review, AMOS (useful routines), ADVENTURES (dead?), ST PD, etc.

The Ed has told me to let everyone know that he plans to get the issues we don't have in stock reprinted soon, so I'll add them to the list when I can!